



May 12, 2010

Dear Participant,

It is our pleasure to invite you to attend the “Lower Mekong Initiative Conference, Transnational Cooperation to Respond to Infectious Disease Threats” (LMI) co-hosted by the U.S. Embassy to Vietnam and Vietnam’s Ministry of Health in Hanoi on June 17 and 18, 2010.

This two-day forum will focus on the International Health Regulations, counterfeit and substandard medicines related to infectious diseases, and regional success in health research. Using a mix of presentations by experts and government officials, discussions, and interactive panels, the gathering will help develop better communication and collaboration among LMI partner countries and between LMI partner countries and other technical collaborators.

Attached, please find background and logistical information about the conference, along with a draft agenda. Additional information may be found at <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/lmihealth2010.html>. We suggest that you confirm your attendance by June 2, 2010.

I look forward to seeing you in Hanoi.

On behalf of the Organizing Committee
Sincerely,

/es/ Andrew Herrup

Environment, Science, Technology, and Health Officer
U.S. Embassy, Hanoi

Lower Mekong Initiative Conference: Transnational Cooperation to Respond to Infectious Disease Threats

Background: On July 23, 2009, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam met in Phuket, Thailand to highlight ongoing cooperation between the United States and the Lower Mekong countries in the areas of the environment, health, and education and to discuss the creation of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) to bolster this collaboration. At this meeting, the U.S. committed to hold a U.S.-Mekong conference on an integrated approach to infectious disease.

Meeting objectives

- a) Provide updates and an overview of current health-related initiatives in the Lower Mekong Region
- b) Review the International Health Regulations, focusing on policies and regulations for implementing communicable diseases surveillance and reporting with a focus on transnational communication and notification
- c) Discuss issues related to substandard and counterfeit medications
- d) Discuss opportunities and challenges for research collaboration
- e) Provide a venue and opportunities for informal information exchange and networking among participants.

Intended Audience

This meeting will bring together key government officials from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, along with U.S. Government officials, UN officials and other international NGOs/experts, including from the World Health Organization and the Pasteur Institute. U.S. representation will include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

For more details, please see the attached agenda. Additional information may be found at <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/lmihealth2010.html>.

Support

For official government delegates of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and for those of Vietnam, traveling from outside of greater Hanoi—the U.S. Government will provide your airline ticket, hotel and per diem and an amount to cover miscellaneous costs..

Other regional experts and those from headquarters of other governments or international technical organizations are expected to cover the cost of travel and accommodations in Hanoi.

Dates and Venue: The meeting will be held June 17 and 18, 2010 at the Melia Hotel located at 44B Ly Thuong Kiet Street, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Confirmation: We suggest you confirm your attendance by June 2, 2010 using on-line registration at <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/lmihealth2010.html>. For questions, please send email to LMIhanoi@vn.cdc.gov.

Language: Presentation in English only, with listening interpretation available in Khmer, Lao, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Hotel Accommodations

Melia Hanoi Hotel

44B - Ly Thuong Kiet Street

Hanoi – Vietnam

Tel.: (84-4) 3934-3343

Fax: (84-4) 3934-3344

Website: <http://www.meliahanoi.com>

For official government delegates from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and those from Vietnam, living outside of greater Hanoi—your reservations have been made from June, 16 – 19, 2010 at the Melia Hotel. Please note that your hotel stipend includes only the cost of the room and any associated room tax. You will be responsible for other personal charges billed to your room, such as telephone calls, drinks, meals, or laundry. The room charge payment has been made directly to the hotel for you, but you are responsible to settle the balance for other personal charges directly with the hotel upon checking out.

Other regional experts and those from headquarters of other governments or international technical organizations should complete the attached Registration and Hotel Form on line at <http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/lmihealth2010.html>. Please send an email to LIMHanoi@vn.cdc.gov for any questions. As soon as we receive your confirmation of attendance, we will send you the hotel confirmation. The U.S. Government will not provide funding for these travelers.

Travel Arrangements

For official government delegates from Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and those from Vietnam, living outside of greater Hanoi—the U.S. Government will provide you with a lump-sum travel allowance to cover your expenses during the conference in Hanoi. This includes meals and incidental expenses (M&IE), and other expenses such as visa fee, taxis to and from the airport. Your travel allowance is calculated based on your actual lodging cost in Hanoi and the standard rates specified under U.S. Federal Government guidelines for the cities traveled. Other expenses not specified here (for example, long distance phone calls, laundry, shipping, and excess baggage charges) are not part of this award, and are therefore are the traveler's responsibility. Our Embassy staff will contact you soon regarding travel logistical arrangements.

Other regional experts and those from headquarters of other governments or international technical organizations need to make your own travel arrangements.

Visas

If you are a national of a country that requires a visa for entry into Vietnam, please complete the attached form for a [visa application issuance number](#) (VAIN), and send it back by e-mail to CDC Vietnam at LMHanoi@vn.cdc.gov along with scanned copies of your bio-page from your passport no later than May 20, 2010. In cooperation with the Vietnamese Ministry of Health, after receiving the form and scanned copy of your passport, we will request a VAIN from the government of Vietnam, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Once the VAIN is issued, it will be sent directly to the Embassy of Vietnam in your country of origin. This process usually takes two weeks. CDC will inform you when the VAIN is issued so that you can obtain the visa. For travelers from the United States, the Vietnamese Embassy is in Washington, DC.

Transportation from the airport to the hotel venue

The hotel is 28 kilometers from the airport. Upon arrival at Noi Bai International Airport, please proceed to Melia Hotel by hotel shuttle or taxi. To arrange the hotel shuttle, please contact the Melia Hotel directly. If you choose not to ride the hotel shuttle, there are two reputable taxis available at the airport: Airport Taxi (Tel: +844 3873 3333) and Noi Bai Taxi (+844 3886 5615). Both are available immediately as you exit the airport. Please ensure that you have enough cash in Vietnamese Dong or U.S. Dollars (which is widely accepted) for your travel to Hanoi. Travel time is about 40 to 45 minutes. The fare is currently about VND 300,000 or USD 20 if you pay one-way.

Please do not allow anyone standing outside the exit to lead you to a taxi, there are signs indicating the taxi stand. Please walk up to the stand and let them know where you want to go. It is a flat rate and the amount is displayed on the board at the taxi stand by the name of the company.

General Information

Banking

ATM: Most major banks in Hanoi and even countrywide now offer ATM service. Look for Vietcombank and Incombank branch locations throughout the city. New ATMs are popping up all over; there's a machine out in front of the Vietnam Airlines Office, for example, and near the city's major shopping centers (now in the Trang Tien Plaza). Ask the hotel concierge where to find one. Consult with your bank office at home to inquire about international ATM usage fees. Most range from just USD 1.00 to 1.50.

Banks and Currency Exchange: The best service, that is 24-hour ATMs with guards, is at the Australia New Zealand Bank (ANZ), 14 Le Thai To St. (tel. 04/3825-8190); Citibank, 17 Ngo Quyen St. (tel. 04/3825-1950); and Vietcombank, 198 Tran Quan Khai (tel. 04/826-8045). Most banks will exchange foreign currency, either U.S. dollars or euros, during normal banking hours. You will also find a few money-changing stores along Hang Bac Street in the Old Quarter and around the edge of Hoan Kiem Lake. Hanoi Sacombank, 87 Hang Bac (tel. 04/2261-392), is one such option. *Avoid exchanging on the street or "black market." Black-market moneychangers will approach you outside of the major banks.

Time zone: Vietnam is seven hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and 11 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time (EDT),

Electricity: The voltage in Hanoi is 220 volts, 50Hz. Wall outlets take the continental European type.

Business Hours: Hanoians wake up very early to take advantage of cooler weather, and an early lunch is followed by some rest time in the heat of the day. Most offices close at 5pm and are closed on Sunday. However, Vietnam has a tradition of afternoon siestas, which means that most Hanoi shops and offices are closed for lunch, usually from 11 or 11:30am to 12:30 or 1pm. Restaurants remain open.

Climate: Hanoi experiences relatively high humidity all year and a rainy season from May to October.

Doctors and Hospitals

International SOS, at 31 Hai Ba Trung, just south of Hoan Kiem, is your best bet for emergency services and travel illness. Contact their 24-hour service center at tel. 04/3934-0555; their clinic at tel. 04/3934-0666; or visit the website at www.internationalsos.com.

Hanoi Family Medical Practice at Van Phuc Diplomatic Compound, 298 Kim Phuc (tel. 04/3843-0748), is another walk-in clinic, like International SOS, that caters to Hanoi's growing expatriate community. They have a good dental center.

Another good choice for comprehensive service is The Hanoi French Hospital, south of the town center at 1 Phuong Mai (tel. 04/3574-0740). As the name suggests, the hospital caters to French speakers but doctors and staff can speak English as well.

Taxi: Service is readily available and inexpensive. It is recommended to take reputable taxis such Hanoi Taxi (Tel +844 3853 5353) or Taxi Mai Linh (+844 3822 2666)

Communication: Telephone connections are good and operated by Vinaphone, Mobiphone or Viettel. Phone cards for all three networks are available in the airport and throughout the city. The country code of Vietnam is 084 and the local code of Hanoi is 04

Post Office: The General Post Office is located at 6 Dinh Le St., Hoan Kiem District (tel. 04/825-7036). It's open daily from 6:30am to 10pm. You can also send faxes and make international phone calls there. FedEx (tel. 04/3826-4925; daily 8am-6pm) is located in the same building as the post office but has its own storefront just around the corner. You can also find a UPS storefront on the same block at 10 Le Thach St. (tel. 04/3824-6483; 8am-6pm) and a branch of EMS at 12 Le Thach St. (tel. 04/3824-1271; daily 7am-9pm). Expect to pay anywhere from USD 29 to 74 per kilo, depending on expediency of service.

Participants may use the following address for personal mail for the duration of the conference:

Postal address: (name)
(attending the Lower Mekong Infectious Disease Conference)
c/o Melia Hanoi Hotel
44B Ly Thuong Kiet Street
Hanoi, Viet Nam
Tel. No.: (844) 3934 3343
Fax No.: (844) 3934 3344
E-mail: melia.hanoi@solmelia.com

Meals: Daily tea breaks and lunch will be provided during the conference. Please note that dinner will not be provided by the conference organizers. However, we recommend a list of restaurants for dinning around the hotel. Please see the attachment.